

# MHR *Connections*

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*A student from Margaret Barbour Collegiate works on her school's piece of the banner.*

attending the Commission's Northern Youth Conference in the Pas earlier this month.

The "Peace by Piece" project allows students to send a message about human rights. The six schools that participated in this conference had only one hour to be both creative and thoughtful during the afternoon activity session. Working in school teams they talked, cut and pasted to create their portion of the banner which is estimated to be at least 24 feet by 24 feet when it is assembled.

Chairperson Jerry Woods opened the day explaining that the 2008 conference called "Our World, Your World My World" was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He said he hoped it would draw everyone's attention to human rights issues faced around the world and in our own backyard.

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the foundation of international human rights law, and the first universal statement on the basic principles of inalienable human rights," he said adding, "The world is changing, new issues emerge, and even a country like Canada has to consider what may become a human rights issue in the future. We can try to anticipate. We can even dream."

*conference continued on page 2*

THE MANITOBA  
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## The Rights Connection by Jerry Woods - Chairperson

For a very long time our society has used age as means to determine what you can and cannot do in everyday life. You can't vote until you are 18 or drive until you are 16. On the other end of the age yardstick, older Canadians have to convert their RRSPs to registered retirement income funds or annuities by the end of their 71st year. In some jurisdictions, once you reach a specific age, you must leave the workforce.

Using age as a yardstick sometimes works, but not always. This is the case when it comes to mandatory retirement. In January, 2008 British Columbia's Attorney General Wally Oppal declared that "Mandatory retirement is a past, not a future," and with that statement the province became the latest one to abolish the practice. Manitoba saw that future for most people 25 years ago when mandatory retirement was prohibited here.

Although more and more jurisdictions are reviewing their human rights legislation and how it applies to mandatory retirement, the reality is that today, your right to not retire depends on where you live and who you work for.

For example, if you work for a bank or an airline you will probably be forced to retire at a certain age because the Canadian Human Rights Commission has jurisdiction over such federally regulated entities. Recently a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled against two Air Canada pilots who believed they were being discriminated against on the basis of their age. They had been forced to retire at 60.

If you work in a factory in Nova Scotia, and the retirement age is 65, you would have to retire. In Manitoba, that might not be the case.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission believes that mandatory retirement is a form of age discrimination. If your workplace falls under provincial jurisdiction and you live in Manitoba, retirement is not based solely on chronological age, but rather on the concept ability. Other than a few legislated exceptions such as universities, if you meet the requirements and conditions of the job, you can continue to be part of the workforce.

Mandatory retirement may be in the past for most Manitobans, but it still remains in the future for some Canadians.



*A Cross Lake School student enjoys the hands-on activity.*



*Chief Sam Cook Mahmuwe Education Centre's contribution to the banner.*

## University of Winnipeg offers new program in human rights

### Degree focuses on global citizenship

People looking for careers in international rights, humanitarian and refugee work, or international aid now have the place to get the appropriate training. The University of Winnipeg will be offering a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Rights & Global Studies, the only one of its kind in Western Canada.

Through its Global College, the University will offer both Three-Year & Four-Year B.A. degrees with classes beginning this fall. The intent of the UWinnipeg program is to give students the opportunity to explore human rights issues in the context of globalization because of its ties to social justice and global citizenship.

"The human rights and global studies major is another example of the relevant education our University provides individuals," said Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, University of Winnipeg President & Vice-Chancellor and long time champion of human rights. "Issues in the area of human rights have been at the forefront for many years and will only continue to grow in the years to come. Students taking part in this program will be able to leave UWinnipeg and make a difference in the world."

For more information on the new Major in Human Rights & Global Studies, please visit <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca> or contact the Global College at 204-988-7105 or by email at [s.funk@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:s.funk@uwinnipeg.ca).

### Law Day 2008 - Open House

**"Celebrate Our Rights and Freedoms"**  
April 13, 2008  
Law Courts Building - 408 York Avenue  
12:00 Noon - 4:00 PM

Events include:  
Mock trials by students  
Legal Information Panel Discussions  
Special Sitting of Citizenship Court  
Tours of Law Courts Complex  
Display Booths

He suggested the students consider the right to clean air and water and the right to food and shelter.

The afternoon keynote speaker was Michael Champagne, a young Aboriginal man who grew up in Winnipeg's North End. In his address, "Taking Chances, Creating Change," he spoke about taking negative stereotypes and turning them into personal challenges.

"Anything worth achieving is worth fighting for," he said, and encouraged the participants to realize that anything they wanted was within their reach and capability.

The students also attended two workshops; "Are You Smarter than a Human Rights Officer" is a quiz based on human rights issues. "Scenes from a Hat - Human Rights Style," is a skit-based workshop putting the students into situations where rights and responsibilities come into play, and gives them the opportunity to change what they see or hear happening.

Over the lunch hour the winner of last year's "Making a Difference Challenge" was announced. The students from Margaret Barbour Collegiate in The Pas received a \$500 cheque for their school and took home a Certificate of Achievement. After last year's conference these students put together an anti-racism presentation for younger students in The Pas who in turn were encouraged to come up with their own anti-racism message.

The staff is now preparing for the next two conferences, one in Winnipeg on April 24 and the other in Brandon on April 25.

## 2008 International Women's Day celebrates inspiring women

International Women's Day was acknowledged on March 7 with a new Manitoba Women's Advisory Council publication honouring some of Manitoba's most inspiring women.

According to Nancy Allan, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, "the women who contributed to this publication are leaders in many different areas – their communities, business, the labour movement, and as elected leaders."

Included in the booklet are many of Manitoba women's electoral firsts. Among those cited are Edith Rogers, the first woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature, Thelma Forbes, the first woman from Manitoba to be appointed to the Senate and Sharon Carstairs, the first woman in Manitoba to lead a provincial political party.

Many community leaders can also be found, some with inspirational messages like Hannah Taylor, student and founder of the Ladybug Foundation.

"No matter who you are...you can change the world for the better if you find your passion," she says.

For further information on this publication call 204-945-6281 or visit [www.msac.mb.ca](http://www.msac.mb.ca).



Many students thought that Michael Champagne's presentation was one of the conference highlights.

